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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2015

TESTIMONY OF THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
TO THE  
COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

**S.B. 428: AN ACT PROTECTING INTERNS FROM WORKPLACE HARRASSMENT  
AND DISCRIMINATION**

Thanks to Senator Winfield, Representative Tercyak, and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on an act to protect interns from workplace harassment and discrimination.

As the mayor of our state's largest city, and a strong advocate for employee rights, I was shocked to learn that only four states – California, Illinois, Oregon, and New York – give all interns the same rights as other employees when it comes to protection from sexual harassment in the workplace.

The major issue in most states, including Connecticut, is that unpaid interns aren't technically considered employees. That's a significant problem when it comes to sexual harassment.

A case-in-point occurred recently in New York where an unpaid intern at a television network alleged that a supervisor made unwanted and physical sexual advances on her. But instead of making a decision based on a thorough and fair investigation of the allegations, a federal court in New York ruled in 2013 that she had no grounds to sue because she was not an employee under the law.

This story caught the attention of New York lawmakers last year. It served as the inspiration for passing -- and eventually signing into law -- landmark legislation (A08201A) in the Empire State that extends sexual harassment protections to unpaid employees.

I'm torn by this story: on one hand, it's a great example of lawmakers hearing about a major problem, and coming together to fix it. On the other hand, it's another example of our failing to address a problem until a high-profile example forces us to do so.

That's why I'm so supportive of passing this legislation at the state level in Connecticut. Because I think it's critical to tackle this issue before it happens to someone else. It's terrible to think

*"Together we are making Bridgeport the cleanest, greenest, safest, most affordable city, with schools and neighborhoods that improve each year"*

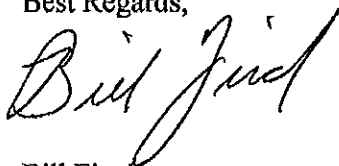
about, but tomorrow it could be our sons, daughters, granddaughters, grandsons, cousins, nieces, or nephews.

It's unacceptable, and it needs to stop now. We need to address this issue. Let's give all employees, including all interns, the workplace protections they deserve. It's the right thing to do.

I urge all members of the committee to strongly consider passing this legislation.

Thank you.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bill Finch".

Bill Finch  
Mayor